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**REMARKS
BY
LAUNCH EVENT OF BABY BASICS BANGLADESH
PROGRAM AND BABU BARTA BOOK**

May 28, 2015

**BISSHO SHAHITTO KENDRA (2ND FLOOR), 14 KAZI NAZRUL ISLAM AVENUE,
DHAKA**

Dr. Gowher Rizvi (GO-her RIZ-vee); Honorable Advisor to the Prime Minister;

Shireen Huq (shee-REEN Huck), Founding Member of Naripokkho (nar-ee-POHK-ko);

Dr. Ananya Raihan (ah-NAHN-ya RY-hahn), CEO of Dnet;

Distinguished guests, colleagues, members of the media, ladies and gentlemen:

Assalamu aleikum, nomoshkar, and good afternoon.

I am delighted to be with you today as we launch the new Baby Basics Bangladesh Program and unveil the Babu Barta (BAH-boo BAH-rah-ta) pregnancy guide book. It is an exciting day for both Bangladesh and the United States as we once again highlight the valuable partnership that our countries have shared for more than 40 years. It is also an exciting day for many thousands of soon-to-be mothers who will participate in the Baby Basics program throughout the country, many of whom may otherwise be left without any resource for prenatal information and support.

The fruits of what we celebrate today are the result of many years of hard work. Nearly three years ago, then-Secretary of State Hillary Clinton announced a new “Women’s Health Innovation Program” as a way to help women – particularly those plagued by poverty and illiteracy – learn about healthy practices during pregnancy for safer childbirth. Thus, the Baby Basics international program was born, building on more than 10 years of success in the United States in educating and empowering women so that they may experience a healthy pregnancy, safe delivery, and most of all, have a healthy baby.

Now, Bangladesh is one of only two new countries where the Baby Basics program is being introduced, and rightfully so. Bangladesh has achieved incredible gains in health and also happens to

be one of only a small handful of countries to reach both Millennium Development Goals 4 and 5 by significantly reducing maternal and child mortality.

Given Bangladesh's successful track record, coupled with a rigorous process to make the Baby Basics book and materials beautiful, comprehensive, and easy to understand, I am certain this will serve as yet another valuable tool in the broad effort to protect the lives of mothers and their babies. This simple yet innovative approach will be particularly helpful in reaching pregnant women in communities where poverty and illiteracy often prevent them from accessing the formal healthcare system. Instead, Babu Barta will equip women with crucial knowledge and empower them to make healthy choices for a healthy pregnancy.

In closing, I want to thank the Honorable Advisor and State Minister for their relentless support in improving the health and well-being of women and children throughout Bangladesh. We look forward to building upon this successful partnership between our two countries.

I also want to thank my colleagues in Washington from the Office of Global Women's Issues, as well as D-Net – our partner in Bangladesh – for their outstanding work in developing this valuable tool.

And on behalf of the United States Government, we remain strongly committed to working with Bangladesh to achieve this country's goal of making sure all Bangladeshis receive the basic health services they need to lead healthy, happy and prosperous lives.

Thank you very much.

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**As prepared for delivery*